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Addendum

UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE SPECIAL INITIATIVE ON AFRICA: PROGRESS REPORT

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I. BACKGROUND

A. Rationale and goals of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa

1. The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa (UNSIA) was designed to rationalize United Nations assistance to Africa, including that of the Bretton Woods institutions, through more effective coordination, synergistic actions, capacity-building and by facilitating genuine partnerships.

2. The successful adoption of political and economic reforms in a growing number of countries increased the mood of optimism. Despite encouraging results however, poverty remains pervasive. The spread of HIV/AIDS, displacement from civil conflicts, disruption of livelihoods, prolongation of human suffering and scarce resources for development, all contribute to the apparent entrapment in poverty.

3. UNSIA was launched to help Africa to help itself and to ensure that the commitment of the United Nations system to support Africa's development efforts was sustained in a comprehensive and coherent manner. A number of problems were associated with the launch. First, early scepticism arose from claims of insufficient consultation throughout Africa and among major donor partners, hence African ownership was doubted. Second, the $25 billion announcement at the time of the launch sent mixed messages as to how the Special Initiative would generate additional resources, particularly in light of declining official development assistance and scarce investment flows. Third, in the absence of a clear intergovernmental legislative framework, misperceptions that the UNSIA was conceived to undermine the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF) detracted further from the credibility of the new Initiative. In the years since the launch, therefore, an effort has been made at the implementation stage to overcome these difficulties, recognizing, however, that a 10-year process must be framed in reality.

II. IMPLEMENTATION

A. African leadership and ownership

4. In addressing the root causes of problems facing the continent, UNSIA seeks to reinforce visionary African leadership, to empower people, to revalidate the African development priorities set out in the 1995 Cairo Agenda for Action and, ultimately, to build sustainable partnerships. In the context of the Special Initiative, country-driven strategies therefore become the primary basis for external assistance.

5. The joint launch of UNSIA in 1996, involving the Chairman and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Heads of State of Ghana and Senegal, the Vice-President of Kenya as well as the support of other senior Africans at similar events on the continent, were a signal demonstration of African ownership. The foundation of a new partnership between Africa and the United Nations system was in early construction. One year later,

African leadership support for UNSIA was formally reaffirmed, first at the level of the OAU Annual Conference of Foreign Ministers and subsequently at the June 1997 OAU Summit, by African Heads of State and Government in Harare, Zimbabwe. The need for the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deepen the national ownership of UNSIA is recognized. While progress to date has been limited, efforts are being made to increase CSO/NGO advocacy for constituency-building and for the strengthening of partnerships in the implementation of UNSIA priority areas.

6. With regard to sector priorities, Ministers of Education, as part of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, endorsed the UNSIA framework and assumed leadership for its timely implementation. Similarly, Ministers of Health reviewed the thrust of UNSIA and confirmed its consistency with their agenda to undertake health-sector reform, rendering services more accessible and affordable. Both ministerial groupings identified capacity-building and broadening of consensus as crucial for effective implementation of the Special Initiative.

7. With the formal endorsement of UNSIA as the implementation mechanism of UN-NADAF at the thirty-seventh session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), African missions to the United Nations are becoming more supportive. That decision, reflected in the report of CPC at its thirty-seventh session and endorsed by the General Assembly, provides the intergovernmental underpinning needed to enhance collaboration between the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries and the UNSIA secretariat. CPC also recommended that regional cooperation and integration and economic diversification should be incorporated into UNSIA programme priorities. Discussions are under way between both organizations on how best to incorporate these activities within a joint programme of work, already in place for other priority sectors.

B. Sustainability of the commitment of the United Nations system

8. The second goal of the Special Initiative is to honour the commitment of the United Nations to support the continent's development efforts as reflected in its own identified priority areas, through appropriate goal-oriented country and regional programmes around which true partnerships between Africa and the international community can be built.

9. The March 1996 launch brought together all Executive Heads of the United Nations specialized agencies and organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to pledge their commitment to Africa. The collaborative arrangements among United Nations specialized agencies were defined during the fourth meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) steering committee, held in Nairobi in April 1996. The best illustrations of progress are demonstrated in countries where government policies and strategies are clear and in those sectors where coordinating agencies have provided creative and determined leadership:

(a) World Bank overall commitment to UNSIA and collaborative leadership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the

United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization of cluster coordination in education and health have resulted in greater programme coordination, holding out the promise for additional resources. Work plans for 15 countries with low enrolment rates at primary education levels are being finalized. This will pave the way for tangible progress towards dramatic improvement of enrolment rates in those nations;

(b) Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and UNDP leadership in governance is aimed at improving coordination arrangements and reinforcing resource mobilization strategies for those countries that are participating in the annual Africa Governance Forum. Fourteen countries participated in the first Forum in Addis Ababa in July 1997 and another 16 are expected to attend the next Forum in mid-1998. The Governments of Norway and Switzerland have already pledged their support for the organization of the Forum. The European Commission and the Government of the Netherlands are considering the provision of additional funding;

(c) ECA leadership in the priority area Harnessing Information Technology for Development (HITD) has resulted in agreement that of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) becomes the implementation framework for HITD. With greater awareness, utilization of information technology, and Internet connectivity, Africa is being prepared to take advantage of the information revolution and to cope with many of the challenges of globalization;

(d) The International Monetary Fund and World Bank association of the Highly-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative with UNSIA creates an added forum for discussing the issues surrounding Africa's debt problem;

(e) United Nations Industrial Development Organization support for the Alliance for Africa's Industrialization, whose Plan of Action was endorsed by the Conference of African Ministers in Ghana in June 1997, further strengthened the integration of this priority sector within UNSIA, an unambiguous commitment to partnership in Africa.

10. With the clarification that all African countries are entitled to participate in the Special Initiative, regardless of their stage of development, resources for upstream capacity-building activities are now becoming available. Cluster consultations and two technical working group meetings in Addis Ababa (December 1996) and in New York (September 1997), have made more explicit the extent to which policy and programme impediments need to be overcome before countries can begin to access resource flows from sector investment programmes. Resources from Norwegian bilateral trust funds managed by the World Bank and UNDP and from the UNDP Support for Policy and Programme Development, are now becoming important sources for addressing the upstream capacity-building needs of many African countries, facilitating the sharing of experience and promoting regional activities. Countries with low enrolment rates in primary education will be the first beneficiaries of these funds. Similar arrangements are being examined for the health sector.

11. United Nations system delivery on its commitment to support the Special Initiative has been somewhat uneven. Information from various lead and

cooperating agencies on the progress of implementation of some priority areas is neither readily nor regularly available. Cluster consultations, joint work programmes, information exchanges and reporting are therefore of limited value. The goal of identifying synergies and benefiting from the collective efforts of the United Nations system is yet to be fully achieved. The adoption of a common communication and information strategy could assist in meeting these challenges.

C. Donor support

12. Positive signals of donor support for UNSIA were given during the G-7 meeting in Lyon in 1996 and the Tidewater meeting in Japan 1997, as well as in several intergovernmental discussions, including those of CPC in June 1997 and of the Special Session of the Security Council on Africa in September 1997. Further efforts are being pursued to translate these signals into concrete actions linking the Special Initiative with other initiatives, such as the Tokyo International Conferences on African Development (TICAD I and II) and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC). In this way, partnerships with Africa can be considerably enhanced and additional resources mobilized from the donor community in a more coordinated manner.

D. Country level implementation

13. Progress at the country level is widely viewed as the primary measure for determining the added value of UNSIA. United Nations country team retreats in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Togo, led by resident coordinators, have been helpful in defining the best ways to harmonize programming instruments and reporting requirements. While the common objective of these retreats was to take stock of the status of UNSIA implementation, discuss and resolve a number of issues and reach agreement and/or expand understanding on how to move forward, each was tailored to the country-specific needs as agreed on by the United Nations country team. Those country-specific objectives included support for capacity-building in the implementation of sector investment programmes in Ethiopia; building broad-based coalitions among the Government, donors, the United Nations system and other partners in support of UNSIA and strengthening the country strategy note (CSN) process in Ghana; and emphasis on the search for a strategy to deepen dialogue with the Government on the finalization of the common country assessment (CCA) in Mozambique. In Togo, the main objective was to agree on the formulation and implementation of a joint United Nations system programme of support to the National Programme for Poverty Eradication. The participation of Governments (Ethiopia and Ghana), donors (Ghana and Mozambique) and NGOs (Ghana), has set the pattern for other retreats being planned. Effective linking of UNSIA to existing or planned, programming instruments was a constant theme raised by participants, for example, the CSN (approved for Ghana, Mozambique and Togo); the CCA and country cooperation framework (in draft for Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique), and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) pilot exercise. Although not specifically linked to UNSIA, greater United Nations country team collaboration is also evident in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and Zimbabwe, in most instances aiming at achieving the goals of the Special Initiative.

14. Support by bilateral donors for primary education in Mozambique and Senegal resulted directly from consultations and agreements in the context of the Special Initiative. In Senegal, with the active collaboration of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNDP and the World Bank, France is leading the process of programmed support for government efforts to overcome policy impediments. For instance the issue of accommodating the cost of teacher's salaries within the macroeconomic framework is being addressed and will eventually contribute to greater resource flows through sector investment programmes. Similarly, resource mobilization efforts in Mozambique led to a consultation on education organized by UNESCO in Paris. Bilateral donor support was critical in assisting Government efforts to place primary education within a macroeconomic framework. These two examples are now reflected by Zimbabwe, where the Government has requested the Resident Coordinator to liaise with UNESCO for a similar consultation on the education sector strategy, scheduled to be held on 9 and 10 March 1998.

15. Fourteen countries, (Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda), presented governance programme frameworks at the first Africa Governance Forum (AGF I) in Addis Ababa, in July 1997. Representatives of civil society, donors, OAU and the United Nations system participated. Sixteen countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) have been invited to the second Forum (AGF II), planned for June 1998 in Accra. At the time of writing the present report, positive responses had been received from eight countries. While AGF I had a wide-ranging agenda, the 1998 consultation, will focus on the theme of accountability and transparency. In preparation for this event, national consultations are being planned, involving the participation of as many stakeholders as possible. An organizational group including representatives of Ghana, Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland, the Global Coalition for Africa, Transparency International, the World Bank and UNDP (the Management Development and Governance Division and the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA)) met on 10 February and agreed on plans for AGF II. Civil society organizations with significant experience in accountability and transparency issues will also be invited to participate in AGF II.

E. UNSIA and UNDAF

16. Important goals of UNSIA include the promotion of coordination and collaboration among United Nations specialized agencies, enhanced harmonization in support of national priorities, lowered transaction costs, improved aid effectiveness and increased efficiency in the utilization of United Nations system resources. The new system-wide programming instrument, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, designed to facilitate reform of the United Nations, though in its early stages, provides an opportunity to strengthen coordination and collaboration at country levels. The synergy between the goals of the Special Initiative and the strategic vision that governs UNDAF need to be fully exploited. Initial work in 10 pilot countries in Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Zimbabwe) provides practical demonstrations of how the United

Nations country team harmonizes its efforts under the collegial leadership of the resident coordinator. Commonality of objectives between UNSIA and UNDAF, such as collaborative programming, is beginning to emerge, but will need to be tested and implemented, particularly in the priority areas of the refocused Special Initiative, bearing in mind major United Nations conference goals.

F. Gender and population mainstreaming

17. Although it was agreed during the fourth meeting of the ACC steering committee that the cross-cutting issues of gender and population should be fully integrated in all UNSIA priority areas, progress has been slow. At the Addis Ababa Technical Working Group meeting, UNFPA called attention to the need for gender-disaggregated data analysis and gender-focused training for realizing gender-related goals. Similarly, the United Nations country team in Ethiopia recommended that gender focal points within each United Nations entity should incorporate UNSIA implementation in their agendas. Discussions involving the UNSIA secretariat, UNIFEM, RBA and the ECA Africa Women's Centre are beginning to show progress and a work plan for gender mainstreaming within UNSIA is being developed. UNFPA presented a preliminary action plan on population to the ACC steering committee at its seventh meeting in March 1998.

G. Communication strategy and information dissemination

18. Reliable information, generated and disseminated at predictable intervals, revealing best practices or approaches to problem solving, will be invaluable in building the credibility of the Special Initiative. A common communication strategy is essential to effective political mobilization, African ownership, donor support and internalization within the United Nations system. All stakeholders will need to be fully involved, from conceptual stages through implementation, taking full advantage of relevant information technology. A newsletter, periodic coverage in Africa Recovery, establishing and maintaining UNSIA-specific web sites are important elements of this communication strategy.

III. THE WAY FORWARD

19. On 9 February 1998, the UNSIA secretariat organized a retreat, co-chaired by the Administrator and the ECA Executive Secretary, to measure progress and put forward recommendations to the spring session of ACC and the seventh ACC Steering Committee meeting. The retreat recommended that the Initiative be refocused around those activities that meet identifiable criteria, such as demonstrable results attributable to UNSIA; the building of ambitious and substantive partnerships revolving around national leadership and ownership; demand-driven activities; effective United Nations system support at country levels; and creative and dedicated leadership of coordinating agencies. Based on these criteria and after careful review of progress achieved, the Initiative is being refocused around education, health, governance, harnessing information technology for development, gender and population. Other equally important activities, such as food security, trade, poverty, and debt will need to be monitored for evidence of systemic collaborative results.

20. Political mobilization for the new focus aims at greater African advocacy, including that of Heads of States, Ministers and representatives of civil society. Mobilization of the heads of United Nations bodies, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, becomes more crucial in demonstrating unequivocal support for the UNSIA framework. This will have a positive effect on resource flows for Africa.

21. UNDP involvement and support to UNSIA is critical for its sustainability on several counts. As co-chair of the ACC Steering Committee and Chairperson of the United Nations Development Group, the Administrator directs policy coordination, oversees implementation, reports to ACC and ensures that the resident coordinator system operates effectively in bringing all facets of United Nations system activity at the country level into a coherent framework. UNDP performs the lead role in coordination of UNSIA priority sectors of governance and sustainable livelihoods for environmentally marginal areas. At the same time its support as a cooperating partner in poverty eradication, education, health, trade, debt, water, food security, South-South cooperation and information technology for development are well reflected in programme country activities and at the regional level. The UNSIA secretariat operates through two branches, linked respectively to ECA and to RBA. Funding for the secretariat is provided entirely by the UNDP regional programme for Africa and, in that regard, faces financial constraints currently evident within UNDP. Discussions are under way within the ACC Steering Committee framework, exploring how best to expand the outreach of the UNSIA secretariat, either by direct funding from bilateral sources or through a network of United Nations system focal points.

22. The Administrator will provide an oral report to the Executive Board on the details of the UNSIA implementation plan, including the outcome of the seventh meeting of the ACC Steering Committee, during the current session of the Board.